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COMMUNIST CHINESE AIR CAPABILITY AGAINST INDIA

USIB MEMORANDUM

US Intelligence Board Comments 

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Submitted by the
DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

Concurred in by the
UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

As indicated overleaf

19 December 1962

Submitted by the

DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of this estimate: The Central Intelligence Agency and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, Defense, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and NSA.

Concurred in by the

UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

on 19 December 1962. Concurring were the Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State; The Director, Defense Intelligence Agency; the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army; the Assistant Chief of Naval Operations (Intelligence), Department of the Navy; the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF; the Director for Intelligence, Joint Staff; and the Director of the National Security Agency. The Atomic Energy Commission Representative to the USIB and the Assistant Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, abstained, the subject being outside of their jurisdiction.

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

19 December 1962

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UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD COMMENTS ON [REDACTED] "Communist Chinese Air Capability Against India," dated 4 December 1962."

1. The significant points of difference and agreement are considered below in the order of their appearance in the [REDACTED] study.

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2. [REDACTED] para. 5.) We are in general agreement with the judgments made in this paragraph but would suggest the following wording for it:

"We believe that as a result of the discord in Sino-Soviet relations the Soviet Union has not supplied any modern offensive aircraft to China in the past two years, although she has been willing to make them available to other countries such as Iraq, Indonesia, and the UAR. We consider that as long as the serious rift in relations remains the Soviet Union will be reluctant to supply modern aircraft to China and China will be faced with growing obsolescence in her Air Forces. Even in the unlikely event of her economic problems and ideological differences being resolved in the near future, it would be several years before China could significantly improve her air capability, unless combat aircraft were directly supplied by the USSR."

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3. [REDACTED] para. 8.) A comparison of [REDACTED] estimates of CCAF and CCNAF combined strength follows:

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CCAF/CCNAF TOTAL

	2,850	2,650
Jet Fighters	1,980	1,920
Jet Light Bombers	390	325
Piston Light Bombers	125	105
Special Ground Attack	120	40 prop and 60 jet
Piston Medium Bombers	15	15

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We have firm evidence of two TU-16's (BADGERS). What evidence we have suggest that these aircraft are not operational, but we cannot be certain. They were probably delivered to the Chinese by the USSR prior to mid-1960. We estimate the strength of the transport force to be approximately 195 piston short-range aircraft.

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4. [REDACTED] para. 9.) We believe that the Chinese have approximately 260 airfields, including 135 which are suitable for jet fighters or jet light bombers, and 30 which can be used for jet medium bombers.

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5. [REDACTED] para. 11.) Not all Chinese airfields usable for light bomber or fighter action against India are at very high altitudes. The airfields most likely to be used for operations against the Ladakh-Jammu-Kashmir area, are Hotien, at 3,000 feet elevation with a crushed rock runway, and Soche, at 4,400 feet elevation with a sod or natural surface. In regard to radius of action and/or bomb load for jets operating at

airfields of high elevation, we believe that a number of operational factors must be considered. Air temperature as well as runway length is important in estimating required take-off distances. We do not believe that reduction in radius of action and/or bomb^{load} would arbitrarily be required in all instances. At Lhasa, at 14,000 feet elevation and 0° centigrade, we believe that a BEAGLE could take off with a full 4,400 pound load in approximately one-half of the 11,000 feet [REDACTED]

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6. [REDACTED] para. 13.) We would suggest the following wording for paragraph 13: "The medium bomber force possesses a very limited strategic bombing capability due to its small size. The BULL, a piston-engined bomber dating from 1948, would be highly vulnerable to jet interception."

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7. After [REDACTED], paragraph 13, we would suggest the addition of a paragraph on deployment to read as follows: "At present virtually all of the Chinese medium bomber force is located in the Sian area, none of it being present in Tibet or Sinkiang. In times past BATs, BEAGLEs, and BULLs have operated in Tibet from Kaerhmu. The BAT, with a 440 nautical mile (n.m.) radius and normal bomb load of 3,300 pounds,

1/ See Table attached to Appendix B for BEAGLE take-off and landing weights.

would be the most reliable aircraft for tactical strikes because of its slower take-off speed and greater maneuverability at low levels. The BEAGLE could bomb targets in northern India from bases in Szechuan (Chengtu), Tibet, Yunnan, and possibly Sinkiang. The BULL and the BADGER, with a combat radius of over 1,600 miles, could cover most of India from their base in Sian."

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8. [REDACTED] para. 14.) China's air defense capabilities in the Himalayan area are limited due to insufficient radar coverage and the apparent absence of any jet fighter aircraft. The nearest jet fighter unit is probably located at Chengtu, but units could be redeployed to Tibet and Sinkiang. We believe that the Chinese have a limited early warning capability in the Ladakh area, but are not equipped to handle tactical intercept air operations from bases in Tibet. Within China proper we have firm evidence of a small number of surface-to-air missile sites at Peiping, San-yuan (near Sian), and the Shuang-cheng-tzu missile test facility.

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9. [REDACTED], para. 17.) We would suggest deletion of the first sentence of this paragraph.

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10. [REDACTED], para. 18.) We would suggest the following language for the first sentence: "The Chinese Communists would use transport aircraft in airborne operations; however, extensive airborne operations

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are unlikely if they would cause a major disruption of essential air transport operations."

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11. [REDACTED], para. 19.) We do not believe that China's ability to wage an air campaign against India would be seriously handicapped by the need to maintain her present air posture. We would suggest deletion of the second sentence. In regard to the third sentence, our evidence is inadequate to allow a precise estimate, but we believe that at most 290 tactical aircraft could be committed to operations against India including 180 jet fighters, 50 jet light bombers, and 60 piston light bombers.

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12. [REDACTED], para. 20.) We would suggest deletion of the first sentence. We agree [REDACTED] that the key to air operations would be the amount of logistic support, particularly POL, which could be provided to forward bases. However, the first half of the second sentence appears to contradict the opening sentence. Our logistics planning has been based on the premise that the aircraft listed in paragraph 11 could operate from 6 airfields, 4 of which are in the critical logistics zone of western Sinkiang and southern Tibet. The Chinese could supply the latter airfields with a maximum of 500 tons per day.

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13. [REDACTED] para. 21.) We have little evidence of stockpiling of air supplies in the Tibetan area. We believe that if the Chinese exerted a maximum effort, they might be able to deliver a total of 2,240 tons daily to the Tibetan area, including 2,000 tons by road and 240 tons by air (assuming the use of 175 civil and military aircraft). They could divert some 500 tons of this potential maximum to support air operations against India. However, it is not likely that the Chinese would choose to make such an all-out effort. Currently some 12 transports (8 at Hotien and 4 at Lhasa) are probably operating in the area. We believe that up to 50 small transport aircraft could be diverted to support operations against India without imposing unacceptable restrictions on the overall Chinese air transport system. Under optimum conditions, these 50 transports could supply some 60 tons daily for a sustained period from railheads in China proper. Currently, the total tonnage delivered into Tibet is estimated to be 500 to 700 tons daily, virtually all by road.

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14. [REDACTED] para. 23.) We are unable to judge the accuracy of the sortie figure and logistics requirements listed because of lack of information [REDACTED].

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15. [REDACTED] para. 25.) Of all Tibetan airfields, we believe that the Chinese are most likely to use Nagchhu Dzong for jet light bomber operations.

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16. [REDACTED] para. 26.) [REDACTED] we believe 25X1X7

that BEAGLES could operate against Delhi as well as Calcutta, the former operations being from Soche airfield north of Ladakh. We do not believe that the potential threat from Chinese medium bombers "would be small" because of the small numbers which could be launched. The psychological effect on the Indian population and Armed Forces could be very sizable.

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17. [REDACTED] para. 27.) We concur that raids by Chinese piston bombers would likely result in heavy casualties. [REDACTED] 25X1X7

25X1X7 [REDACTED] we believe that until Indian early warning capabilities are substantially improved, Chinese jet light bombers could penetrate Indian defenses in limited numbers without suffering unacceptable losses.

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18. [REDACTED] para. 30.) We would suggest the following substitute wording for this paragraph: "In view of the limitations of and other calls upon the transport force, extensive airborne operations are unlikely. The air situation, however, would not necessarily be unfavorable to the Chinese in all areas where they might contemplate limited airborne operations."

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19. [REDACTED] para. 31b.) We do not believe that China's ability to wage an air campaign against India would be seriously handicapped by the need to maintain her present air posture and deployment. Further, we estimate that China would initiate tactical air operations only if

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Chinese leaders considered it necessary to achieve their objectives. We estimate that China is unlikely to undertake air attacks deep into India unless in retaliation or in the event of a change in their military objectives.

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20. [REDACTED] para. 3lc.) We agree that the Chinese could mount only light, sporadic raids against India with piston bombers. However, it is likely that Chinese BEAGLEs could be effective against Indian targets in sustained operations involving limited numbers of aircraft until such times as the Indian air defense system is substantially improved. Moreover, we would hesitate to ignore or minimize the psychological significance of even token Chinese raids on Indian cities and military targets.

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21. [REDACTED] para. 3ld.) We believe the Chinese Air Force could provide air defense for a few localities in the Tibetan area. Although the five airfields in the Sinkiang-Tibetan area most likely to be used in operations against India would be vulnerable to air attack, we do not believe that this alone would deter the Chinese from mounting operations from them.

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22. [REDACTED] para. 3le.) We believe that the Chinese are capable of undertaking limited airborne operations, although this appears unlikely in present circumstances. There is some evidence that limited supply drops have already taken place.

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NOTE: We find a number of discrepancies [REDACTED] thinking on 25X1X7
the technical data presented in the Annexes [REDACTED]. There 25X1X7
has not been time to work out a coordinated [REDACTED] position on the specifics, 25X1X7
but this will be done [REDACTED] 25X1X7

Some examples of the discrepancies are:

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[REDACTED]
the design bomb load for the BEAGLE is probably up to 6,600 pounds but
believes that BEAGLE bomb bay dimensions indicate a maximum capacity of 25X1X7
eight 550-pound general purpose bombs totaling 4,400 pounds. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] in estimating BEAGLE opera- 25X1X7
tions from Nagchhu Dzong in Tibet rather than Lhasa, makes no restriction
on BEAGLE bomb load as long as surface temperature is 0° centigrade or
less (see page 7, attachment 4, to AFIC study dated 11 December).

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[REDACTED] 25X1X7
FRESCO aircraft could be employed either
with one 1,000 pound bomb or two 550 pound bombs.

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c. [REDACTED] estimate that the FAGOT (MIG-15) in a ground attack role, carrying two 550 pound bombs, would have an internal fuel combat radius of 235 n.m. [REDACTED] estimates that the FAGOT in this configuration would have a combat radius of only 100 n.m. If, however, the FAGOT was carrying only one 550 pound bomb instead of two, [REDACTED] 25X1C8b believes that its combat radius could be 240 n.m.